

**FAIRBANKS METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM  
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

**City of Fairbanks, Council Chambers  
800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701**

**Meeting Minutes  
March 3, 2010**

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Gardino called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

**2. Introduction of Members and Attendees**

The following were present:

- \* FMATS Policy Committee members
- \*\* FMATS Staff members
- \*\*\* FMATS Technical Committee members

NAME	REPRESENTING
*** Donna Gardino	FMATS Coordinator
*** Michael Wenstrup	FNSB Planning Commission
*** Martin Klein for	Jonathon Shambare ( <b>absent</b> ) UAF
*** Jerry Woods	Tanana Chiefs Conference
*** Dave Sanches for	Michael Meeks ( <b>absent</b> ) Ft. Wainwright
*** Ethan Birkholz	DOT&PF
*** Bill Butler	City of North Pole
*** Bruce Carr	ARRC
*** Joan Hardesty	ADEC
** Todd Boyce for	Bernardo Hernandez ( <b>absent</b> ) FNSB
*** Mike Schmetzer	City of Fairbanks
*** Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks
*** Glenn Miller	FNSB
** Margaret Carpenter	DOT&PF
** Tara Callear	FMATS Planner
Mary Ann Nickles	Resident
Austin Hill	AKRR
Jim Blizzard	Ft. Wainwright
David van den Berg	Downtown Association
Anna Plager	Resident
Martin Klein	UAF
David van den Berg	Downtown Association

**3. Public Comment**

NONE

**4. Approval of the March 3, 2010 Agenda**

- **Motion:** To approve the March 3, 2010 agenda. (Carr/Woods). None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** NONE

**5. Approval of the February 3, 2010 Minutes**

- **Motion:** To approve the February 3, 2010 minutes. (Woods/Birkholz) None opposed.  
Approved.

**Comments:** NONE

## **6. Committee Reports**

### **a. PM 2.5 Subcommittee- Agreement Status**

Ms. Gardino explained that this is an agreement between the FNSB, FMATS, DEC and the ADOT regarding who is going to be responsible for doing the transportation conformity analysis for projects and plans within the PM2.5 Non-Attainment (NA) area.

Mr. Birkholz said that the ADOT is happy with the version that is currently in review with the FNSB legal department. Mr. Miller said that he has not heard any issues with the agreement and that he does not see the need for another Subcommittee meeting on the issue.

Ms. Gardino said that she would share it with the Committee and put it on the agenda for next meeting. She said that this is one of the obstacles to getting the CMAQ funding, so completing this task will allow for the release of those funds.

She added that as a part of this agreement the DOT is going to have to develop a methodology for long range projects that are in the NA and not in the MPO because they will need to be considered in the conformity analysis done for the FMATS LRTP. This will ensure that projects are not delayed. The conformity lapses for the LRTP and the TIP if the analysis is not complete by December 14, 2010.

Mr. Birkholz said that the proposed schedule has this being turned over to FHWA by December 14, 2010. He is questioning whether or not it will be an issue if it takes FHWA a month or two to approve it due to the timing. He does not yet have an answer as to whether or not December 14, 2010 is the just a submittal deadline. Ms. Gardino also added that DOT issued an RFP for a consultant to conduct a conformity analysis for the LRTP and the TIP. Proposals were reviewed and Sierra Research was selected and they are currently in negotiations over a term contract that will cover project level conformity or hotspot analysis for PM2.5. Negotiations with the consultant are currently underway currently to see if the schedule can be moved up. It cannot be moved up by a lot.

Ms. Gardino told the committee that Peter Serrano is no longer at FHWA and, in the interim, Michael Vanderhoof will serve as the FMATS contact.

## **7. Old Business**

### **a. Bus Shelters**

Mr. Miller said that the suggested language in the ROW agreement has been approved by the FNSB and DOT and it should be executed and move forward.

Ms. Gardino said that additional money could become available for more bus shelters. Mr. Birkholz added that if there are project needs, that this would be a good time to pursue funding because there could be a situation this year where it could be difficult to get all funds obligated in before the end of the federal fiscal year.

Mr. Miller said that he has told David Leone about this potential. He said that it is not likely that all the structures can be replaced with the current level of funding. He also added that at this time, they are not sure exactly how much each structure will cost.

Mr. Birkholz said that there were questions about the signing. He said that anything questionable should be submitted to DOT Traffic Department and, if possible, they will work with it. He said he is not familiar with the specifics of the issue. It was recommended that this be addressed ahead of time to avoid delays.

**b. Cushman/Barnette Two-Way Study**

Mr. Schmetzer said that the consultant is still evaluating the impact of the one-way bridges decision on the Cushman/Barnette Two-Way project. A draft report is due in April.

**c. 2010-2013 TIP Amendment No.1 and Obligation Status Report**

Ms. Gardino reminded the committee that at the last meeting they did recommend to the Policy Committee to approve this document. They decided to hold off on the approval due to the status of the Surface Transportation Bill. She said that, despite the lapse, there is now a 28 day extension until March 28<sup>th</sup>. She noted that no Stimulus Bill has passed yet. Headquarters recommended proceeding with the Amendment, showing projects as illustrative for the purposes of a possible Stimulus Bill in the future. If and when it occurred, if projects were listed as illustrative, it would simply require changing the funding source to put these projects into the fiscally constrained portion of the TIP.

Ms. Gardino said that the Policy Committee approved, in addition to the previously discussed changes, the addition of \$150K to begin a second stage of the LED Streetlight Conversion project. She said that the current project replaces 1800 lights and there are approximately 800-1000 remaining. Low bids freed up \$2.4 million which needs to be obligated this year. The COF can now proceed with the design, but the construction phase funding of \$1.2 million was left as illustrative in the TIP because it would be a project eligible for stimulus funding if it became available. This leaves the options open for this funding.

Other changes to the TIP that have been made since the Committee recommended the approval are the addition of \$35K from the North Pole Street lighting earmark fund to the LED Streetlight Conversion project. These earmark funds were leftover and could be applied to this project because it was also for streetlights. Also, the Plack Road Bike and Ped Path project was not going to be able to obligate \$416K by the end of FY2010. These funds were therefore added to the Preventive Maintenance program for signal detection upgrades. This moved Plack Road out to 2011 and funds were adjusted from Illinois Street awaiting a final estimate from the Illinois Street Project.

Ms. Gardino referenced the Obligation Summary included in the packet, that shows all the obligated funds to date. She reported that 25% has been obligated. She added that there is \$4.1 million in de-obligated funds, of which \$2.3 million remains for change orders etc.

Mr. Birkholz updated the Committee on the CMAQ funding distribution. DEC is currently drafting the agreement and will be available for review soon. He explained that the current CMAQ projects listed in the illustrative section will be moved to the regionally significant, non-NHS section of the TIP. He said that there would then be a sub list, like that for Preventive Maintenance, explaining the specific projects that the funds would be spent on.

- **Motion:** To recommend to the Policy Committee to approve FFY 2010 – 2013 TIP Amendment No. 1 as presented, with technical changes as required. (Birkholz/Carr) None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:**

Mr. Carr asked for clarification on the de-obligated funds, asking what the proposed uses are for the additional funds. Ms. Gardino directed him to a list of proposed projects in the packet. He asked what else was being considered. Ms. Gardino added curb cuts and street lights.

## **8. New Business**

### **a. Alaska Railroad Schedules**

Mr. Carr and Mr. Hill lead a discussion about the timing of the Railroad schedules and their impact on traffic, particularly on University Avenue. The train arrival time in Fairbanks is 7:57a.m. meaning that the rear of the train has cleared the Fairbanks Street bridge. The schedule is set based on the trailer customers in Anchorage, who deliver their freight to the yard at 5 pm. The train departs Anchorage by 8 pm and it is a 12 hour trip. The freight must be off-loaded in Fairbanks by 10 am to get it to the retailers. He noted that a passenger train departs Fairbanks at 8:15, crossing University at 8:40.

Mr. Birkholz asked if the Anchorage cut off time for trailer delivery could be adjusted to 4 pm. Mr. Hill said that that timing was driven by the freight customers, who ideally would prefer to deliver it later; however, this would not meet the 10 a.m. off-load time in Fairbanks.

Mr. Carr reemphasized the need for meeting the customer's needs. He said that they have to balance the demands of the customers or they will turn to other modes of transport. The customers are dictating the service and arriving in Fairbanks at 8:30 am rather than 8 am would not meet the needs of the customer. He said that the Railroad is investing in projects to be able to reduce the travel time from Anchorage to Fairbanks to less than 11 hours.

Mr. Butler pointed out that the major concern with this is that it hits Fairbanks right when commuters are going to work. He also noted that the Railroad is currently seeking support from FMATS and the community as they seek millions in federal support. He suggested that changing the schedule by 10 minutes would, at very least, be a good will gesture to improve the flow at this critical intersection at peak travel times. He said that the interests of this other group of "customers" should also be part of the balance.

Mr. Carr agreed that it is a joint project. It will take the community together, it is not a Railroad project alone. He said that it happens to affect the Railroad, but it is a community project. It will change road systems and railroad systems. He reiterated, however, that they are driven by what the customers want. They have gone through years of coordination with these customers to achieve this schedule. He said that if the customers pulled out due to a schedule change, the Railroad loses and that is not what the Railroad is in business for. The Railroad is profit driven and self-sufficient. He added that schedules have been changed in other areas of the community for the purposes of increasing school safety.

Mr. Carr reminded the Committee that the DOT has a long-standing project to grade separate the University Avenue crossing. He said that the project created a lot of safety concerns that the Railroad cooperated with the DOT to reach an agreement on an acceptable grade going into the yard. He said there are solutions, but the current solution is customer driven.

Mr. Butler pointed out the PM2.5 concerns caused by the excessive idling of the traffic sitting at that intersection as the train passes at peak commuter travel time. He noted that other railroads in other communities work to avoid such conflicts. Mr. Carr suggested that commuters change their schedule by 10 minutes. Mr. Butler said that that means that the commuters must change their schedules to fit the Railroad and the Railroad still expects the good community will of support. He said he himself has sat in that line with a water tank and it froze up. These types of things create negative public opinion.

Mr. Carr said there are unintended consequences when you consider changing the schedule by 15 minutes to arrive at 7:45 a.m. or at 8:15 a.m.. He said that this simply impacts a different set of commuters. He said that if the train arrived at 6:00 a.m., the people that were stuck waiting would complain to say that the train ought to cross at 6:30 a.m.. He said that changing the schedule would just shift the problem to impact other commuters and other businesses.

Mr. Carr said that there are sections of the track where speed may be increased. He also mentioned the Collision Avoidance System. He said that if such speed increases were to occur and the train were to arrive at 7:30 am, he predicted that this same discussion will be had that it is again causing travel delays at peak travel time. He suggested that if it is such an issue at this particular intersection, perhaps a better solution is to address the issue of traffic congestion at the intersection. Grade separation is the solution to this.

Mr. Miller agreed that in order to make a difference, the schedule would need to change by an hour. He said that there is obvious need and concern and he suggested that the Railroad take this and look at it for possible solutions. Mr. Carr reiterated that the schedule is in response to the needs of the customers. He said that if such a conversation needs to be had, that the local customers need to be part of the discussion and decision. He said if PM2.5 is the issue, make it known to the customers. He said that FMATS should ask the customers what the Railroad should do to meet their needs and while addressing the PM2.5 concerns and the commuter's expectations. He said that for the purpose of such a discussion, that FMATS should know what the ideal crossing time would be to mitigate the problem. Mr. Schmetzer asked if DOT has traffic counts for this intersection. The answer is yes.

Mr. Carr said that any change, regardless of what it would be, would be balanced by changing delivery times in Fairbanks, not departure times in Anchorage.

Mr. Schmetzer asked why not change the start time. Mr. Hill said that that would affect all kinds of traffic patterns and schedules of trains that are out there. They are not going to change the schedule in Anchorage.

Mr. Carr said that this is not going to be solved here today. He said that this discussion is offering the Committee a flavor of what it means to operate a transportation system. You cannot just look at a single train at a single crossing. It is part of a system. Mr. Miller said he can appreciate this from a transit perspective, but there are times when the public speaks up and affects the system. It is a balance. He again asked if the Railroad could look at possible solutions in response to this public concern.

Mr. Wenstrup added that it seems, from this discussion, that there is no solution other than a grade separation. If the train speeds up, the customers will demand a delayed Anchorage start. If a meeting was arranged with the Fairbanks customers to negotiate a schedule adjustment, all the other train schedules would be impacted.

Mr. Carr responded saying that either the crossing needs to be eliminated, which is not possible, or it needs to be grade-separated.

Mr. Wenstrup asked if say Fairbanks customers agreed to a 9:15 a.m. arrival, is it possible to look at adjusting other train schedules to accommodate this change.

Mr. Carr gave a logistical example, explaining that this again be impacting the customers in other parts of the system. It is not just that single train that is impacted. It is part of a system. The logistics are finely tuned.

Mr. Wenstrup suggested gathering a list of the customers impacted by such a schedule change, both on the receiving end and otherwise. Mr. Carr agreed.

Martin Klein said that if it were known what the peak travel time was at this intersection, then it would be more clear where the change needs to be made. It would be easier to weigh the trade off. Ms. Gardino agreed to share that information. Mr. Boyce said that counters on University collect data on 15 minute intervals.

**b. Public Participation Plan Public Review Draft**

Ms. Gardino referred to the draft in the packet and requested comments from the Committee by Tuesday. These will be added to the staff comments. All comments will be shared with the Technical Committee before the Policy Committee approves the Draft for public comment at the next meeting. She said that this update aligns the plan with the SAFETEA-LU requirements. The Civil Rights Office was pleased with the plan and with FMATS current efforts to involve the public.

Mr. Miller said that the language required in the announcements by the FTA has changed and agreed to send the revised language.

**9. Public Comment Period**

Mary Ann Nickles commented about the Railroad discussion suggesting that increasing public awareness about the scheduling would be another way to mitigate the problem.

David van den Berg added to a humorous comment made at the start of the meeting regarding wrong way travel on one-way streets downtown. He said that he routinely observes this from his office at Cushman and 5<sup>th</sup>. He said that this is simply another reason to consider the proposed changes to the downtown traffic patterns to two-way traffic. He added that speed is also an issue.

**10. Other Issues**

Ms. Gardino asked that all Committee members read the FMATS newsletter to keep pace with what information is being shared to the public.

**11. Informational Items**

**a. Policy Committee Action Items from February 17, 2010**

Ms. Gardino referenced the action items included in the packet for informational purposes.

**b. Jobs for Main Street Act of 2010/Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act**

Ms. Gardino updated the Committee on the status as it relates to FMATS interests, noting the current uncertainty.

**c. Vehicular Contributions to PM<sub>2.5</sub>: Current Study, Phase I**

Ms. Hardesty presented to the Committee about the process. Photos were shown of the testing setup at the bus barn.

**d. Chena River Multi-Use Pathway**

Ms. Gardino said that the LRTP incorporated all local plans into the development process, this being one of them. She said that originally, the Chena Riverfront Commission and Festival Fairbanks have developed plans for pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the Chena River. She referenced the draft plan map that was shared in the packet.

Questions were raised about the draft plan and it was noted that it is a draft. Mr. Carr said that the plan potentially poses issues with the Railroad. Ms. Gardino said that the plan attempted to mitigate some of the issues.

Mr. Carr said it is a wonderful vision and the Railroad will try to work with them, but at this time the Railroad has not agreed to this plan. The plan needs to be refined before further consideration and he cautioned the Committee that it is a contentious issue. Mr. Carr said that there are more feasible options that afford the same connectivity and agreed to share with the Committee what has been shared with the Festival Fairbanks as an alternative. Mr. Birkholz pointed out that it defeats the purpose of it being a river walk. Mr. Carr went on to add that Festival Fairbanks ideally would like a path along both the north and south sides of the river.

**e. Bike Map Update**

Ms. Gardino that the Bikeways map is being revised. She said that the revision will include new facilities, error corrections and changes to the facility designations. Ms. Callear added that AASHTO bike facility guidance does not specifically state what constitutes a bike-able facility, but FMATS is using this guidance to draft definitions of suitable bikeway facilities for the Fairbanks Area.

Ms. Callear added that this is an opportunity to gather information to add to our existing facilities database. Additionally it is an opportunity to follow up on the recommendation made by Kittelson as part of the LRTP development. They had recommended that such definitions be established. In this case it is important because if we are publishing a map and stating that facilities are bike-able, the responsible agencies should be in agreement as to what a bike-able shoulder width is and what width facility is suitable for shared-use designation.

Mr. Pristash recommended asking for input from the Cycle Club. Mr. Butler said that he is less concerned about the experienced riders because they are going to ride wherever they feel comfortable. Mr. Carr pointed out the concerns about shoulders being used for snow storage in the winter months. He recommended looking at the Winter Cities Institute website for information.

Ms. Gardino asked the Committee for their input. Ms. Callear suggested that the definitions and the AASHTO guidance be shared with the Committee for discussion at the next meeting.

**12. Adjourn**

- **Motion to adjourn.** (Birkholz/Carr) None opposed. Approved. Meeting adjourned 1:43 p.m. The next scheduled Technical Committee Meeting is April 7, 2010, at Noon at City Hall, in the City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Council Chambers.

Approved:



Donna Gardino, Chair  
FMATS Technical Committee

Date:

